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PROGRESS OF THE WORLD

Mr. Chesterton should be delighted with some of the recent paradoxes of science, which suggest that the more man learns the less he comprehends, and the more he attains the more he is humbled. It was a great triumph of astronomical research and mathematical skill to ascertain the size and other elements of the familiar star Betelgeuse. But the results were necessarily expressed in terms quite unintelligible to the ordinary human mind, if indeed they were entirely comprehensible to even the most highly trained scientific intellect. Even when, laying aside talk of trillions and quadrillions, it is said that Betelgeuse is so huge that were it as near to us as is our Sun, its orb would cover the entire visible expanse of the sky, understanding fails and imagination is baffled. And then, when it is plausibly suggested that Canopus may be as much larger than Betelgeuse as the latter is than our Sun, the finite mind falls functionless. Similarly bewildering are the calculations concerning the nebula in Cetus, which observers at the Lowell Observatory have been studying. We are told that it is moving at the rate of 1,100 miles a second, and that it is so far away that millions of years are required for its light to reach the earth. The approximate accuracy of the computations is not to be challenged. But we are compelled to confess that we have learned things which we are unable to understand. With these incomprehensible facts before us concerning space and time, the reflective mind must feel humbled and chastened at the mere suggestion of infinity and eternity.

The decennial controversy over the reapportionment of Representatives in Congress, after at first inclining toward an increase of numbers to 483, is apparently to be ended with retention of the present total of 435. The increase would have permitted all States to retain as many Representatives as they now have, while many would have enjoyed increases. With the total kept at 435,

changes in the distribution of population will cause Missouri to lose two members and Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, Rhode Island and Vermont one each; while California will gain three, Michigan two, Ohio two, and Connecticut, New Jersey, North Carolina, Texas and Washington one each. These changes occasion some surprise, particularly at the gain of members by such old settled States as Connecticut and New Jersey, and the loss of members by such comparatively new and supposedly growing States as Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska. Partial explanation, at least, is to be found in the fact that industrial and urban population has been increasing more rapidly than agricultural and rural, so that now for the first time in our history a majority of the people of the United States live in cities. This condition has, of course, been greatly promoted by the war and the industrial changes caused by it, and it is not unreasonable to anticipate some reaction from it, which may be perceptible in the next census. The most pertinent question raised by the reapportionment is, however, whether it would not be well to abate these decennial controversies by establishing either a fixed number of members for the House, or a fixed ratio for their apportionment. Thus if the total number were fixed at 435, or any other number, more than half the disputation over reapportionment would be avoided. There would have to be changes every ten years, in which members would be taken from some States and be added to others; but they would be indicated by law and be effected practically automatically. The alternative plan would be to leave the total number indeterminate, but fix the number of inhabitants entitled to a Representative. At present there is one Representative to every 211,000 or a major fraction of that number, and under the new apportionment there will be one to every 242,267. If the rule were established that there should always be one for every 250,000 or a major fraction thereof, the character of each reapportionment would be automatically determined by the census, and the work would be immensely simplified. The adoption of either of these plans would probably require an amendment to the Constitution; which would be by no means the least worthy ever made.

Another extraordinary "coincidence" is to be recorded in European affairs. On January 24 the Premiers of the Allied Powers were to begin an important conference at Paris for the purpose of compelling prompt completion of German disarmament and also of fixing definitively the amount of indemnity which Germany should pay. But on the very day preceding that meeting a semi-official statement was issued at Berlin, and ostentatiously blazoned to the world, to the effect that the existence of a formidable "Red" army, organized by the Communists and equipped with vast quantities of both light and heavy guns and all the munitions of war, had been "discovered" by the German Government, and that this army was at the point of beginning a violent revolution. The purpose of this pronouncement was of course obvious. We should wonder that even Prussians could be so stupid as to suppose that the Powers could be imposed upon by so palpable a trick, were it not that similar tricks have actually prevailed; chief among them being the pretence of Germany's extreme poverty and distress and consequent inability to pay indemnity. In contradiction of this hypocritical plea it is refreshing to read the words of soberness and truth in a report by the eminent French economist Professor Georges Blondel, who is well known in America as well as elsewhere throughout the world as one of the most trustworthy of authorities. As a result of long and painstaking personal investigations he reports that Germany's wealth is to-day as great as it was before the war, that her great industrial concerns are now paying dividends of from twenty to thirty per cent against only five or six before the war, that she is fully able to pay France's entire claim for damages, but that she will not do so unless forcibly constrained, her aim being to regain her ante-bellum preëminence in industry and commerce before she makes any payment whatever to aid the rehabilitation of the regions of France which her troops devastated. That the German National Treasury is in straitened circumstances, Professor Blondel concedes. That, however, is because it does not properly levy upon the vast private wealth of the nation. If it collected taxes at the rate that France does, it would quickly become plethoric with wealth and would be able to pay the billions which it owes.

The fall of the Leygues Cabinet in France was not unexpected, and the choice of M. Briand to form and lead a successor to it was no surprise. It had been assumed from the beginning that the first Cabinet under President Millerand's Administration was little more than a *ballon d'essai*, which, having served its purpose, would presently give place to a more permanent and formidable organization. The occasion of M. Leygues's resignation indicated, however, the serious nature of the problem and the task before M. Briand. The French Government has been and is between two forces which if not actually hostile are at least not harmonious. On the one hand the French Nation, through its representatives in the Chamber of Deputies, demands—with entire propriety—prompt settlement of the terms of peace with Germany and collection of a substantial indemnity, in order that the work of rehabilitation may be promoted, the foreign debts of France be paid, and the people be relieved of some part of the crushing burden of taxation. On the other hand are the other Allied Powers, with other interests to consider which may not be in accordance with the strenuous action which France desires. For the French Cabinet to refuse the Nation's demand is to invite a vote of no confidence; for it to antagonize the Allies is to incur chaos. It is a trying situation.

Some curious studies in deportation have recently been observable, suggesting a lack of uniformity in practice which might well be remedied. Mr. Martens, the German agent of the Bolshevik rulers of Russia, came hither as a so-called "Ambassador" for the purpose of conducting political propaganda contrary to the tranquillity and welfare of the United States, and flagrantly violated the laws of the country by conducting contraband intercourse with Russia through messengers who evaded the immigration and passport regulations. Yet on one pretext and another he was permitted to remain here for months and to depart at his leisure after practically completing the campaign for which he came hither. Mr. O'Callaghan, the Lord Mayor of Cork, came hither in defiance of the law, as a stowaway, and was pretty promptly ordered to be deported, but was permitted to remain until he had accomplished the political errand on which he had come, the pur-

pose of which was to foment ill-feeling between the United States and another friendly nation. Mr. Boland, Secretary to the "President of the Irish Republic," also came hither, and publicly incited lawbreaking and outrage; and was not so much as threatened with deportation or even rebuked for his incendiary utterances. There is no national right more absolute or fundamental than that of every country to determine what aliens it will receive as guests, on what conditions it will receive them, and what deportment it will require of them. There is probably no country in the world more careless and capricious in that important matter than the United States has been recently.

There will be no occasion to add a postscript to Carlyle's "Hero as Poet" in favor of Gabriele d'Annunzio; though indeed that might have been considered a few years ago. It is a real loss to the world to have his military career end in so ignominious an anti-climax. He was at first the real voice of Italy, arousing the nation to war against the hated Tedeschi. Then the voice was transmuted into a flying sword, as he, with consummate skill and daring, led the "airy navies" of Italy across the war zone, to raid again and again the foeman's land. Once more he became a voice, protesting against the loss in council of what had been won on the battlefield, and doing valiant work for Italia Irredenta in the Peace Conference. Even his reckless exploit at Fiume, at the beginning, had all the elements of heroism. But he stayed there too long. He did not perceive the psychological moment when it was possible for him to withdraw with substantial victory won and with his fame assured only a little less than that of Garibaldi. Pettishness and pique usurped the place of valor, and he disappeared from the scene amid jeers instead of cheers, and with the pity instead of the plaudits of the world. It was a sorry ending of a once superb career.

The disastrous fire in the Census Office at Washington, which inflicted simply irreparable loss upon the nation, and which gave the disquieting suggestion of the possibility of other similar but still more grave catastrophes, should serve to teach a two-fold lesson. One is, obviously, the need of storing valuable books and

papers in really fireproof—also damp-proof and vermin-proof—places; the impossibility of which it would be absurd to deny. The other is the desirability of having printed copies made of all statistical and historical documents, partly for convenience of reference, and partly in order to assure the existence of copies if ever the originals should be destroyed or should fade into illegibility or crumble into dust through the slow processes of time. Doubtless it would be an enormous task to do this, even if it were confined to the really valuable documents and the great mass of indifferent and practically useless stuff were sent to the paper-mills. Yet it would not be so great a task as that which has been performed in printing voluminous editions of reports and what not which were of not the slightest value. “The art preservative of arts” should surely be employed to secure the treasures of the past against the vicissitudes of time.

Hopeful progress seems to be made toward the reconstitution of the union of Central American Republics; a movement which it is impossible to regard without sympathy, and also without a certain self-reproach for the unfortunate course of the United States in recent years toward that most desirable consummation. For while it was under the auspices of the United States fourteen years ago that there was taken the most auspicious and practical step toward reunion since Carrera’s dissolution of the old Republic in 1840, it was also the United States, a few years later, that sordidly and short-sightedly compelled that step to be abandoned, and it is to-day this country that presents the only considerable obstacle to perfect union of the five States. The fault lay in our negotiation of a treaty with Nicaragua without paying any attention to the other States whose vital interests were directly affected by it. We surely should have realized, ever since the days of Hise, Squier, and the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, that a Nicaragua Canal by way of the San Juan River would be on Costa Rican almost as much as on Nicaraguan territory, and that Costa Rica was entitled to be consulted in the matter and to be a party to the treaty which might be made. Since those same strenuous days, too, we should have remembered that Honduras and Salvador as well as Nicaragua fronted on the Bay

of Fonseca, and were vitally interested in the control of that water. We have no doubt that the maladroit Bryan-Chamorro treaty, which has caused so much trouble among those States and has been and still is an impediment to their reunion, might have been negotiated with all the States concerned just as well as with Nicaragua alone, and thus have confirmed and promoted the reunion which was then in progress, instead of discouraging and defeating it. It should be possible now, by sympathetic and tactful diplomacy, to atone for that error and thus to promote our own good as well as that of the Central American States.

One of the most interesting and significant incidents in the scholastic world is the announcement of Princeton University that it will hereafter limit the number of its students to 2,000; its present undergraduate roll being slightly over 1,800. This action is in striking contrast to the course of other universities which, with several times as many students as Princeton, continue to invite further expansion. It is true that comparison is not entirely just, because some of these other and larger institutions have a multiplicity of departments not found at Princeton; comprising not alone colleges of arts and science, and of law and medicine, but also of pedagogy, journalism, commerce and finance, and what not. Obviously, a university of so vast and varied a range may properly have a larger enrollment than one much more restricted. There is presumably profitable use for both types of institution in this country. The action of Princeton is significant as perhaps the first concrete recognition of that fact, and the first tangible step toward establishing the principle that there shall be colleges and universities of limited size, aiming not at realization of the *studium generale* but rather at the highest attainable standard of scholarship within a restricted curriculum.

Nicolai Lenine's attempt to dictate to the Socialists of the world the terms on which they may be received into the fellowship of his Third Internationale, or Communist party, has met with gratifying lack of success. In fifteen countries, definite action has been taken by the Socialists and Radicals upon the mat-

ter of accepting or rejecting his conditions. Six of them,—namely, the United States, Great Britain, Belgium, Argentina, Switzerland and Austria,—registered emphatic rejection. Four—Germany, Spain, Sweden and Chili—accepted. Three—France, Italy and Norway—split over the question; and two—Holland and Mexico—indefinitely postponed decision. Obviously, the world is very far from being converted to Bolshevism.

The vicissitudes and problems of local passenger transportation in New York City are primarily the concern of that municipality alone. They are, however, so vast as to be, as Governor Miller says, of direct interest to the whole State. We may say more than that. They are generic as well as specific; they are quite typical, in some of the most essential respects, of problems and difficulties elsewhere, all over the land, and in other industries than that of transportation. It is therefore of general interest and, we may say, general encouragement, to find Governor Miller in his suggestions of remedies for the trouble declaring himself unreservedly against municipal or State operation of the car lines. There has too often and too widely been an inclination, whenever things have gone wrong with some “public utility,” to turn to municipal or State operation as the only or at least the readiest and surest cure. Governor Miller wisely and resolutely opposes any such counsel of despair, and insists upon private operation, though of course also upon efficient government control. It ought to be obvious to even the most superficial thinker that if the government cannot properly control corporations of its own creation, so as to require them to perform their duties properly, it would not be likely itself to do the work well, if it undertook it.